



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

April 11, 2006

ICE seeks leads from public in container human smuggling scheme *Telephone hotline set-up for tips*

SEATTLE — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Seattle is asking for the public's assistance in piecing together details of a human smuggling scheme that resulted in the arrest of 22 Chinese nationals at the Seattle seaport last week.

The agency is publishing a local phone number for the public to use to provide any information about the incident that might aid in the ongoing criminal investigation. The tip line can be accessed at **(206) 553-6785**.

So far, agents have determined that the smuggled aliens were from the Fujian Province on China's southeastern coast. The aliens told ICE agents that they paid the smuggling organization approximately \$10,000 each for passage to the United States.

The container vessel involved in the incident, the MV Rotterdam, embarked from Shanghai March 23. Prior to arriving in Seattle, it also took on cargo in Ningbo, China and Busan, South Korea.

Last week's discovery marks the first human smuggling incident uncovered at the Seattle seaport in more than six years. On January 10, 2000, officers from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service intercepted two cargo containers on two different vessels carrying a total of 37 smuggled Chinese aliens. Three of the Chinese nationals died during the journey. The surviving aliens told investigators the three became seasick during the trip and succumbed to dehydration.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.